



ACROSS THE NET

Melton Table Tennis

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Edition 56

NOT MUCH TO SAY, REALLY

I spoke to a doctor last night, and she said that she was hopeful of the virus being eradicated very soon. Mind you, she's a doctor of music, but it was nice to get some good news. In this edition, we look back over 6 years of previous editions and hope that there is a reason to write future editions.

COVID-19 UPDATE

Well, we are still in the grips of a lockdown. It's tough on many of us, driving us crazy and leaving us with a feeling of hopelessness. It's like umpiring a best-of-5 match between two defenders. You know it's going to end sometime; you just don't know if you can hang on until then. But hang tough, my friends. We will get through this.

As you know, both of our venues are currently closed. We have had no word on when these are likely to re-open, so it's just a waiting game. When we hear that the restrictions are going to be eased, your committee will need to meet to discuss how and when we can get back to playing. We'll obviously keep you informed. The best you can do in the meantime is follow the medical advice given, look after each other, and stay safe.

Until then, I thought I'd put together some of my favourite articles from the past 6 years of *Across The Net*, just to give you something to read while you wait for better times ahead. Hope you enjoy them.

SMOKE AND MIRRORS

(Originally published SEPTEMBER 2015)

I recently read an account of an exhibition match seen at the **Palladium Theatre** in *London* during World War II by **Rex Haggett**. It was an exhibition between **Victor Barna** (five-time World Champion) and **Alec Brook** (English team-member). The match took place on the theatre stage between the variety performances and had Brook standing up to the table smashing, and Barna defending and lobbing, being pushed further and further back until he was out of sight behind the curtain. This excited the crowd who gave the players a standing ovation.

Fast forward to the *1980's* when Rex was visiting a local collector's fair and spoke to a person who said that he used to play with and against Victor Barna. Rex related the preceding story to him and the fellow said that he was part of this particular show. He had to stand out of sight behind the curtain and, if Victor Barna missed a ball, his job was to lob one back onto the table so that the exhibition could continue.

It's all smoke and mirrors.

SPOILT FOR CHOICE

(Originally published APRIL 2016)

Now it's time for some simple maths. *What?* You didn't know that table tennis had any maths in it? Well, you have been misled, my friend. Allow me to explain.

I was thumbing through a catalogue the other day, and my thoughts wandered to combinations. How many different types of table tennis bat can you buy? How many different types of rubbers? Although I wasn't seriously involved in the sport back then, I have read reports from the mid-seventies that there were very few players who used anything except **Sriver** or **Mark-V** rubbers, so it would seem that the market was much more limited.

But now players have so much choice that even the experts would have trouble explaining the difference between the relative benefits of Shifter, Shifter Powersponge, Saviga, Super Power, Slice 40, Sonex JP, SP Transcend, SST, Super FX, Sapphira, Spin Art, Sriver, Sriver EL, Sriver FX, Sriver G2, Sriver G2-FX, Sriver G3, Sriver G3-FX, Super Anti, Sharping, Skyline TG2 Neo, Skyline TG3 Neo, Shark, Sigma I Pro, Sigma II Euro, Sigma III Pro, Shadow, Six Shooter Magnum, Six Shooter Pro, Super 40 Defense, Super 40 Defense Soft, Super SpinPips, Sirocco SF, Snowflake Long Pimples, Snowflake Special Long Pimples, Soft Anti Special, Soft Anti-Spin Special, Spring 3B, just to name *some* of the available rubbers which start with the letter 'S'.

Browsing through the online catalogue of a well-known, reputable table tennis supplier, I found **650** different types of blade. The same supplier listed **635** different types of rubber.

So here's where the maths comes in. The possible number of combinations of blade and rubber is **650** times **635**, right? That's a possible **412,750** different combinations. But wait, there's more. You don't have to have the same rubber on both sides of your bat. So we can take that figure and multiply it again by **635**.

This gives a staggering **262,096,250** different combinations of blade and rubber for you to choose from.

And let's not forget that the vast majority of these rubbers also come in a variety of thicknesses, so the figure could be far greater than the over 262 million that I've calculated. Plus the fact that there are blades and rubbers available through other sources which I haven't considered.



And you wouldn't buy a car without kicking the tyres, would you? So you'll want to try out these various combinations, right? Have a hit for about 5 minutes with each one to work out what suits you? Well, you should probably get started fairly soon. To spend 5 minutes trying each combination you will need to be at the table for just over **2,493 years**. And that's if you're playing 24 hours a day with no breaks.

So when someone tells you that they've found the perfect combination of blade and rubber for their game, check their birth certificate. If they're less than 2,000 years old, they haven't really been trying.

CHEERLEADING OLYMPIC-BOUND?

(Originally published FEBRUARY 2017)

Did you hear that Cheerleading is being considered as an Olympic sport?

Give me a “**W**”. Give me a “**T**”. Give me an “**F**”. Yep, you read it right. ***What Tremendous Fun***. At least I *think* that’s what it stands for.

But seriously. Cheerleading? I mean, I thought they were stretching the bounds when they suggested surfing, but ***Cheerleading?!?*** And they don’t even cheer while they’re doing it.

For those of you not familiar with the activity, think of synchronized swimming without the water.

It’s certainly physical. With a combination of dance and gymnastics, a workout is guaranteed, but its claim of being a sport is still in question. While the athletic talents of participants is never in question, critics of its inclusion say that the scoring is based on human judgement rather than an objective or goal, in the same fashion as ballroom dancing and surfing. The same can be said, however, of gymnastics, diving, figure-skating, and other Olympic activities.

Even in legal terms its status is not clearly defined. A 2009 verdict in the state of Wisconsin declared cheerleading a “full-contact” sport, which meant that participants and organisers could not be sued for accidental injury. 18 months later, the U.S. federal court declared that, because of a lack of program development and organisation, it was ***not*** a sport.

Lack of organisation? It seems to be the most over-organised activity going around. In the U.S., competitions are organised and run by **Americheer**, the **International Cheer Union**, the **International Federation of Cheerleading**, the **National Cheerleading Association**, the **United Spirit Association**, and the **Universal Cheerleaders Association**.

The American medical journal ***Pediatrics*** revealed that the number of cheerleaders suffering broken bones, concussions and serious sprains increased by over **100%** between 1990 and 2002, and that in 2001 alone there were ***over 25,000*** hospital visits for cheerleading accidents with shoulder, ankle, head and neck injuries.

In the United States high school system, cheerleaders make up **3%** of the female athletes, but account for **65%** of all serious injuries.

According to the *Australian Institute of Health and Welfare*, the serious injury rate in table tennis is **less than 6 per 100,000 participants**.

So... Give me a “**T**”. Give me an “**A**”. Give me a “**B**”. Give me an..... ah, forget it. Let’s just go and play.



MULTI-TALENTED MONTAGU

(Originally published OCTOBER 2017)

Every now and again we need to remind ourselves that the game we play very nearly faded into obscurity before it had a chance to be popular.

Starting as a form of “indoor lawn tennis”, the game turned into a fad which lasted from the late 1880’s to around 1910 before falling out of fashion. There were only a handful of enthusiasts who kept playing the game, with each group having their own set of rules and scoring system. One of these enthusiasts was **Ivor Montagu**. And it was surprising that Ivor had any time at all for table tennis.

Ivor’s grandfather, **Samuel Montagu**, founded the bank of **Samuel Montagu & Co.**, and served in the House of Commons. In 1907, **King Edward VII** made him baron of the Southampton suburb of Swaythling, a hereditary title that he would pass down to Ivor’s father, **Louis**.

Ivor Goldsmid Samuel Montagu was born in April, 1904 into tremendous wealth at the family’s Kensington mansion. The youngest of three children, Ivor grew up with interests in zoology, filmmaking and politics. Attending **Westminster School**, the **Royal College of Science**, and **Kings College, Cambridge**, he obtained a Masters in Zoology, but was already making his mark in his other areas of interest.



He joined both the **British Socialist Party** and the **Fabian Society** at the age of **14**, the **Young Communist League** by the time he was **17**, and later the **Communist Party**, to which he belonged all his life.

Taking up work as a zoologist for the **British Museum** he also became an active member of the **Labour Party**. He visited the **Soviet Union** in **1925** as a zoologist on behalf of the British Museum and began to actively promote British-Soviet friendship. His passion for wildlife conservation was never extinguished, and he was a council member of the **Fauna Preservation Society** for several years. He was friends with the eminent Soviet conservationist and zoologist **Prof. Andrei Bannikov**, had contacts in Mongolia, and was a champion for the conservation of the endangered **Przewalski’s horse**.

His marriage in **1927** to a commoner caused scandal amongst his family and throughout London’s society, and was reported in the papers with the statement :- *London is agog at the elopement of Ivor Montagu, aged 22, the youngest son of Lord Swaythling. The young son of Lord Swaythling was married secretly yesterday at the Registry Office to Miss Eileen Hellstern. Miss Hellstern is a typist and the daughter of a shoemaker.*

Ivor’s mother, Gladys, received dozens of condolence notes, including one from her close friend, **the Queen of England**, Mary (known to us as the Queen Mother). *“Gladys, I feel for you,”* the Queen wrote to Ivor’s mother.

Eileen Hellstern was a Jewish divorced mother of one who went by the nickname of “Hell”. Their marriage was seen by Ivor’s father as *“an irredeemable calamity”*, and he was so furious with his son that he changed his will, reducing Ivor’s inheritance by three-fifths. Although the parents quickly began to warm up to Eileen, Louis died shortly thereafter and didn’t have the opportunity to restore his will.

Ivor Montagu's career in film would alone be enough to earn him high praise. His first films as director were *Bluebottles* (1928), *Daydreams* (1929) and *The Tonic* (1930), all short silent comedies starring **Elsa Lanchester** and **Charles Laughton** in their earliest screen roles. These films were developed from short stories written by his good friend **H.G. Wells**. A contemporary and friend of **Charlie Chaplin**, Ivor was also an associate producer on four **Alfred Hitchcock** films: *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1934), *The Thirty-Nine Steps* (1935), *The Secret Agent* and *Sabotage* (1936). With his language skills, he also translated novels and plays from French, German and Russian into English.

Ivor's eldest brother, **Ewen** was a strait-laced barrister in civilian life, but became a Naval Intelligence Officer in **MI-6**, during the Second World War. He was the mastermind of the successful deception that launched the invasion of Sicily, **Operation Mincemeat**. He later wrote a best-selling account of that adventure, *The Man Who Never Was*.

Ivor Montagu himself turned out to be working, albeit briefly, for the other side. A **July 1940** cable from the **Soviet Military Attaché** in London identified him as the new recruit (codename: *Intelligentsia*) who was supposed to create a group of like-minded friends to pass military secrets to the Soviets. By the following year, Germany had invaded Russia and the Soviet Union became an ally of Britain's, so that by **June 1941**, both brothers were technically working for the same side, although neither knew of the other's role.

Counter-espionage agents at **MI-5** seem to have suspected Ivor because of his outspoken Communist politics, his hanging around with scruffy Russians and housing a Jewish refugee in his house. But, by far the greatest suspicions were aroused by Ivor's passionate support of international table tennis, which seemed so eccentric to MI-5 that they assumed it had to be a cover for something else. They even tapped his phone and opened his mail, creating three volumes on him by early 1942, but found nothing specific.

And yet, amongst all of these activities, Ivor Montagu still found the time to devote to table tennis. Frustrated by the fractured rules being used by different clubs around the country, he wrote and codified the first "**Rules of Table Tennis**". In 1926 he personally provided the funding for the first world championships, and his family provided the championship trophy, still to this day called the **Swathyling Cup**.

At the age of 18, he originally formed the "**English Ping Pong Association**", however at one of their committee meetings they were approached by solicitors from **Parker Brothers** who owned the "ping pong" brand name.



Ivor Montagu (Centre) with the English team from 1928

The solicitors insisted that Parker Brothers be paid royalties for the use of the ping pong name. Montagu immediately stood and dissolved the "English Ping Pong Association", and invited any interested parties to meet in an adjoining room to form the "**English Table Tennis Association**".

Ivor had a similar stroke of genius and quick-thinking, when intending to hold the European Table Tennis Championships in London in 1926. **Eight** Indian students who were studying in London requested permission to play. Realising an opportunity, he immediately re-badged the event as the **International Table Tennis Championship**.

Having formed the **English Table Tennis Association** and the **International Table Tennis Federation**, he served as ITTF president from 1926 to 1967, and as chairman of the ETTA from 1923 to 1929, from 1932 to 1933, and again from 1936 to 1958. He was also the ETTA's president from 1927 to 1931 and 1958 to 1966.

In his leadership role at the ITTF, Ivor made efforts to connect with **China**, which was then isolated from much of the West. In **1951**, Ivor invited China to join the group and compete in its world championships, a significant gesture since the country was a member in only two other international sports organizations and would not join the United Nations for another 20 years.

Montagu wrote many pamphlets and books, such as *Film World* (1964), *With Eisenstein in Hollywood* (1968), and *The Youngest Son* (1970). He wrote two books about table tennis: *Table Tennis Today* (1924) and *Table Tennis* (1936). He was awarded the **Lenin Peace Prize** in **1959** and was inducted into the **ITTF Hall of Fame** in **1995**.

With distinguished careers in politics, cinema, zoology and table tennis, Ivor Montagu passed away in November 1984, just a matter of weeks after the passing of Hell, his wife of 58 years.

ESCAPE VIA TABLE TENNIS

(Originally published AUGUST 2017)

Many times I have mentioned **Ivor Montagu** in articles on these pages. He was the son of **Baron and Lady Swathyling**, and the person who, before his 25th birthday, had formed the **ITTF** and codified the rules of table tennis. Without Ivor Montagu, we would most likely have nothing to do on Thursday nights.

And while Ivor Montagu was a fascinating character (and one I will write more about soon), his brother and his brother's counterparts were just as interesting, and quietly famous for totally unrelated careers which, strangely, include links to our sport.

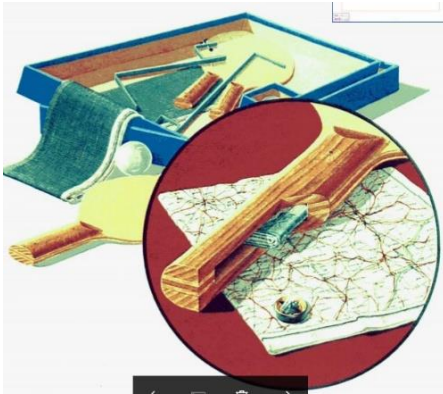


Ewen Montagu, or to give him his full title, **Captain Ewen Edward Samuel Montagu, CBE, QC, DL, RNR**, was a barrister prior to the war, and a British Naval Intelligence officer during the war. It was Ewen's idea to have a body dressed as a British officer with false battle plans dropped into the sea in an attempt to fool the enemy into thinking that an attack was coming from a different direction. After the war, Ewen wrote a book about the deception called "*The Man Who Never Was*", which was eventually made into a film of the same name. But it is the ideas of his fellow officers of the Military and Naval Intelligence which has our interest in this story.

A contemporary of Ewen Montagu was **Christopher Clayton-Hutton** who, together with a team of people formed the **MI-9** division of **British Military Intelligence** and worked at "*Pre-Capture*" and "*Post-Capture*" aids for British personnel during World War II. It was their job to provide soldiers and airmen with the aids to avoid capture and, in the event that they couldn't avoid it, to assist in escaping. The most common of the "pre-capture" aids took the form of maps drawn on silk and miniature compasses hidden in clothing or boots.



“Post-Capture” aids were in the form of parcels sent to prisoners of war. These were sent separate from the **Red Cross** food parcels which were never compromised. The parcels contained the type of activities which would keep prisoners amused and occupied and, as such, were approved of by the German authorities. Board games, draughts, chess sets, dominoes, and other indoor diversions were popular, but sporting equipment was also sent over. Tennis, badminton and table tennis sets were among items sent.



The table tennis sets, manufactured by **Waddington and Jaques**, included 24 table tennis balls, 4 bats and 2 nets. A set of instructions was also included. These instruction books contained hidden coded messages to help prisoners escape.

The illustration on the left is taken from a book written by Christopher Clayton-Hutton titled “*Per Ardua Libertas*” which was published in 1942 by the War Office, and shows a table tennis set with a hidden section in the bat handle which contained a map and compass. This book was only distributed to individuals within the intelligence sector

of the British and American Armed Forces.

The photo to the right shows a table tennis bat with the veneer peeled back to reveal a hidden map and escape instructions beneath. This bat was on display at the museum in **Colditz Castle** in Germany.



And let’s not forget the story I’ve reported previously of the Austrian world champion, **Richard Bergmann** who moved to England prior to the commencement of World War II.

Richard was finally allowed to enlist in the British RAF towards the end of World War II and to serve as a physical training instructor. While stationed on the south coast of England, the reigning world table tennis champion stood as one soldier among 160,000 awaiting D-Day. Bergmann had also qualified as a signals officer, ‘... *directly responsible for giving information to our front line fighters and bombers as to the strength, positions and types of enemy aircraft likely to be encountered during any specific flight*’.

On the **3rd of June 1944**, amid all the chaos of the invasion preparations, Bergmann was lost on the base, looking for the right building to drop off his application for the job of sports officer. Bergmann opened the wrong door. He saw a large room filled top to bottom with shiny white table tennis balls. He closed the door. Then he opened it again to make sure he wasn’t hallucinating. Finally, he understood why his table tennis supplies during the last five years had been so limited. Table tennis balls had been produced exclusively for the RAF to pack into the wings of seagoing aircraft as an inexpensive floatation aid.

It’s amazing that the game we play has had far-reaching effects and has saved lives thanks to ingenuity caused by such hardship.

A GREAT IN BOTH SPORTS

(Originally published OCTOBER 2014)

Now, let's get one thing straight. The tennis player, **Andy Murray** is a **Scot**. He is not English. He may be *British*, but he is certainly not English.

Having settled that small point, **Fred Perry** is still the last *Englishman* to win the Men's All-England Tennis Championship at **Wimbledon**.



Fred Perry came from a relatively poor working-class family and rose to be one of the world's great tennis players when the sport was dominated by the rich and well-to-do. What most people don't know is that before Perry won his Wimbledon titles, he had already won a **Gold**, a **Silver** and **4 Bronze** medals at two consecutive *World Table Tennis Championships*.

In the **1928** Championships held in **Stockholm, Sweden**, he won *Silver* in the **Men's Doubles**, *Bronze* in the **Mixed Doubles**, and *Bronze* in the **Men's Team** event. In the **1929** Championships in **Budapest, Hungary**, Fred won the *Gold* in the **Men's Singles**, *Bronze* in the **Men's Doubles**, and *Bronze* in the **Men's Team** event.

Giving up table tennis and returning to his sport of preference, Fred won **Mixed Doubles** at both the **French Open** and the **U.S. Open** in **1932**. In **1933** Fred won the **U.S. Open Singles** title, and the **Men's Doubles** at the **French Open**. **1934** was a great year for Fred, winning **Singles** at **Wimbledon** and the **U.S. Open**, and **Men's Doubles** at the **Australian Open**.



In **1935** he took out **Singles** titles at the **French Open** and **Wimbledon**, as well as the **Mixed Doubles** at **Wimbledon**. **1936** was the last year Fred won any of the majors, taking the **U.S. Open** and **Wimbledon Singles** titles as well as the **Mixed Doubles** at **Wimbledon**.

In a sad coincidence. Fred Perry passed away in Melbourne while attending the Australian Open in **1995**.

With both tennis and table tennis being such specialized sports, it would be hard to think that anyone could be a world-beating champion in both again, but we live in hope.

THE THINGS YOU REGRET SAYING

(Originally published FEBRUARY 2015)

In his 1914 book, "*America, through the spectacles of an Oriental diplomat*" the former Chinese Minister to the USA, **Wu Tingfang** wrote, "Western sports such as ping pong have been introduced into some mission and other schools in China, but I much doubt if they will ever be really popular among my people".

I wonder what Wu would think of his people now?

A MAN WHO KNEW HIS PLACE IN HISTORY

(Originally published NOVEMBER 2015)

In 2006, **Zhuang Zedong** said, "When I die, everyone in China will know. My death will be reported on the front page of the newspapers and covered on all the radio stations and television channels." This was not a show of arrogance, but simply a fact stated by one of the most revered of all Chinese table tennis players, and a man who was partly responsible for bringing the Cold War between China and the USA to an end.

Born in Yangzhou in 1940, Zhuang joined the Chinese national team while still a teenager. Influenced by the veteran national team member **Wang Chuanyan**, and encouraged by his coach, **Fu Qifang**, Zhuang developed and perfected the "Dual-Sided Offence" style of play by utilising a pen-hold grip and hitting with both the forehand and backhand sides of the bat. Prior to this, most pen-hold players would only use one face of the bat and would push or block on their backhand. Zhuang developed a wrist-flick which gave him enormous power on his backhand side.

In the 1961 World Championships in **Beijing**, Zhuang won *Gold* in the **Men's Singles**, *Gold* in the **Men's Teams**, & *Bronze* in the **Men's Doubles**. At the next World Championships at **Prague** in 1963, he won *Gold* in the



Men's Singles, the **Men's Team**, and **Mixed Doubles**, as well as *Silver* in the **Men's Doubles**. In 1965 at **Ljubljana**, he took *Gold* in the **Men's Singles**, **Men's Doubles**, **Men's Team** and **Mixed Doubles**.

At the peak of his career, the *Cultural Revolution* intervened causing Zhuang and his countrymen much pain over the following years. Unable to play table tennis, as competition was deemed part of the cult of personality and, therefore anti-Marxist, Zhuang turned his attentions to politics and quickly rose in the ranks of the Communist Party. He was appointed as the *Sports Minister*, and took a position in the *Central Committee*. His preservation was assured... for the time-being.



By the end of the Cultural Revolution, Zhuang was past his prime, but still managed to gain a place in the Chinese team at the 1971 World Championships in **Nagoya, Japan**. He still managed a *Gold* in the **Men's Team** and a *Silver* in the **Men's Doubles**, but his life had taken on a bigger meaning due to an accidental event.

Although the Chinese had been warned that they were forbidden to talk to any member of the American team, when 19 year-old American player **Glenn Cowan** accidentally got onto the Chinese team's bus rather than the bus for the other players, a course of events which would change world history was put in motion. Cowan, long-haired and wearing his USA training suit, was greeted with silence. As Zhuang recalled: "*The trip lasted 15 minutes and I spent 10 minutes thinking. We had been advised not to speak to Americans, shake their hands, or exchange gifts. I grew up with the slogan 'Down with American imperialism', but I looked at him thinking, 'He is not the one making national policies, he is just an athlete'.*"

Zhuang approached Cowan and started a conversation through an interpreter. He presented Cowan with a silk-screen print of the Huangshan mountains. The next day, Cowan gave Zhuang a T-shirt emblazoned with the peace emblem and the words "*Let it Be*".

*The exchange made news around the world and impressed **Chairman Mao Zedong**, who reportedly said: "Zhuang Zedong not only knows good ping-pong, he knows good diplomacy too".* Mao issued an invitation for the U.S. team to visit China, which they did immediately after the championships.



This thawing of hostile relations continued. In *July 1971*, U.S. president **Richard Nixon** announced plans to visit China, and a 20-year trade embargo was lifted. In *1972* Zhuang led a Chinese table tennis tour of the U.S. as relations between the two countries grew more friendly.

In *1980*, as part of a purge of leaders involved in the Cultural Revolution, Zhuang was arrested and imprisoned. After years of internal exile, coaching in the province of Shanxi, he returned to Beijing, as a youth coach in *1985*, and published his memoirs, *Adventure and Creation*.

His later life was low-key, and as time passed he came to be remembered more for his role in ping-pong diplomacy than the Cultural Revolution. In the run-up to the Beijing Olympics in *2008*, for example, he gave many interviews, mostly focusing on his "contributions".

Away from table tennis, Zhuang Zedong was a devoted calligrapher, and in *1994* his work was given an exhibition in Singapore. He was inducted into the **ITTF Hall of Fame** in *1999*.

With a total of **10 Gold, 2 Silver** and **1 Bronze** medals at World Championships, and a significant part in world history, it comes as no surprise that at the time of his death in *February 2013*, *everyone in China knew*. *His death was reported on the front page of the newspapers and covered on all the radio stations and television channels.*

A GIANT IN ACTION IF NOT IN SIZE

(Originally published DECEMBER 2018)

Everybody has one. Someone you can look up to; admire; aspire to be like. I have many. I am constantly impressed by people who strive against the odds to improve not only themselves, but those around them. Those who see the obstacles in their path as challenges to be faced and beaten. Giants in their field. **Ogi** was such a man.

Ichiro Ogimura was born in Tokyo in 1932. Having lost his father to tuberculosis when he was 2 years old, his mother struggled to keep them fed, often working 2 jobs until late in the evenings. Because of this, Ichiro had to learn to fend for himself.



In 1948, his first year at Metropolitan Tenth Junior High School, students petitioned the headmaster to buy a table tennis table. The headmaster originally rejected the request, saying that table tennis was a “girl’s game”. Eventually he relented, and a table was placed in the school’s basement. Ogi was hooked. He started spending as much time as he could practicing and playing at the many table tennis clubs which were springing up around Tokyo. He also spent much of the allowance given to him for food on playing table tennis as well, regularly having a single bread roll for his daily meal. Eventually the owner of the practice hall started preparing his evening meals which he ate while still practicing.

Graduating high school, Ogi moved to the **Tengaku Nihon University’s** Faculty of Arts, Department of Films. His studies here would lead to one of the first table tennis training films and, eventually, would aid in the rise of the Chinese dominance of modern table tennis.



Training was always paramount to Ogi’s success. He constantly pushed himself harder, striving to get the best out of his body, regardless of the cost. As well as his hours at the table each day and his daily **10km** run, he added frog-jumping with a **40kg** weight on his shoulders for **4km** each day to increase his leg strength. His game was based around speed, endurance and smash, smash, smash. He was always saying, *“Score 51 times out of 100 and I am a winner”*.

The “Fifty-One Percent Doctrine” was a playing style invented and popularised by Ogimura. It encouraged an aggressive playing style whereby a smash shot would be risked by a player if they believed they had a 51% or higher chance of winning the point with it. This style was later adopted by world champions such as **Zhuang Zedong** from **China** and **Stellan Bengtsson** from **Sweden**, to both of whom

Ogimura served as a coach and mentor.

He placed huge emphasis on accurate serving. Standing a pen on its end, he would try to knock it over 100 times in a row. Once he had accomplished this, he tried the same feat blindfolded.

Years of practice paid off and he won the **1954 All-Japan National Championship**, and was subsequently selected to play for Japan at the **1954 World Championships in London**. A practice partner once said of him, *“I admired how he set himself a goal so ambitious that he couldn’t hope to achieve it and then gave absolutely everything in pursuit of it.”*

He returned from London with gold medals for the **Men's Team** events and the **Men's Singles Championship**. Just five years and seven months after taking up table tennis as a sullen, skinny schoolboy, he'd become one of the national heroes of post-war Japan. He followed this with the **1956 Men's Singles** title, as well as *Men's Doubles* titles in **1956 & 1959**, *Mixed Doubles* titles in **1957, 1959 & 1961**, and *Teams* event gold medals in **1955, 1956, 1957 & 1958**.

Ogimura and fellow Japanese 2-time World Champion, **Toshiaki Tanaka**, created a training film entitled "*Japanese Table Tennis*". A copy of the film eventually made its way to China where it was studied in detail by the Chinese national team.

When Ogimura toured China in the early 1970's, Zhuang Zedong, himself later a three-time world champion, told Ogimura, "*Japanese Table Tennis was the perfect textbook for us. Watching you and Mr. Tanaka practice made us realise that you do not swing a table tennis racket with your arms; you hit the ball with your feet.*"

Far from finished with a career in table tennis, Ogi went on to coach in **Sweden, China** and the **USA**. When questioned about coaching other countries he replied, "*Playing for one's homeland is all well and good, but it implies a rejection of the other countries. Can human beings live together in harmony like that?*"

Such was his impact that the former Swedish National Coach, **Anders Thunstrom** said, "*Swedish table tennis owes him everything.*"

Also interested in developing equipment specifically for table tennis, he worked with Japanese shoe manufacturer **Koyo Bear**, to develop one of the first ever table tennis shoes. In England the shoes were marketed and branded by **Joola**. Koyo Bear are still active in making table tennis shoes.



Always a diplomat, he worked with **Zhou En-Lai** to bring **China** back into world table tennis competitions after the cultural revolution, and was able to negotiate for **North** and **South Korea** to enter combined teams in the 1991 table tennis World Championships.

Ichiro Ogimura was elected ITTF President in 1987, a post which he held until his death from lung cancer in 1994.

"What matters," he said, "isn't extraordinary ability but extraordinary effort"

YOUR FEEDBACK

This is **your** club and **your** opinions are valid and valued. If you have any comments to make on the contents of this newsletter, or if you have any suggestions or information for future editions please let us know.

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